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MYSELF AND I: A CONFESSION

By L. G. WINSTON

Somewhat after the order of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde I seem to possess two distinct personalities, being both at the same time but presenting no such striking contrast as the Jekyll-Hyde combination. They are about equally virtuous. Their main difference seems to be one of age, one being a decade or so in advance of the other.

At times they work harmoniously together and again at cross purposes. I do not seem to have developed equally. Part of me sits humbly at the feet of the other part of me and receives advice and instruction. Part of me feels constrained to confess to the other part of me when it has done wrong and meekly receives rebuke. Part of me tries to shock the other part of me and to force the more dignified part to misbehave and giggle and do things not considered correct in polite society.

My younger part delights to tease the older, to doubt her motives, to interrupt her meditations. It wants to play while my older self is more seriously inclined. My younger self is only twelve years old. This is my real self. To my own mind I am still a little girl with short dresses and a bunch of curls. For some reason my idea of self has never advanced beyond this point. The long dress and the hair piled high will never seem natural. Sometimes I enjoy this duality and again I do not. Sometimes the two parts mingle delightfully together, again they wrangle atrociously, while I (there seems to be a third part of me) sit off and watch the outcome.

The older part gets tired before the younger. The younger still fresh and in a good humor undertakes to furnish amusement for the older. I have often thrown myself on the bed wearied and exhausted and been made to shake with laughter at the capers of the younger part of me. They are capers indeed. On these occasions she will carry on conversations with friends—real friends—fairly bristling with witticisms, and although taking both parts herself, the parry and thrust is delightful.

Sometimes, however, the younger part of me seems to get up all awry. She will carry on quarrels—heated quarrels—from morning till night, taking both sides herself, with persons whom I (the combination) dearly love, and against whom I have no grievance whatever. These are a great distress to my older self.

On other days she seems to take the greatest delight in torturing me with imaginary horrors. She cuts my throat, pulls my eyes out of their sockets, removes tumors and amputates limbs until I wonder that there is anything left of me. She does it all without administering anæsthetics and seems to enjoy my horror and disgust.

Again some little jingle or tune will take her fancy—and she will repeat it to herself until I am almost driven to madness. Sometimes it is only a word, but it seems to have a fascination for her and she rolls it as a sweet morsel under her tongue until sleep puts an end to it.

Again, if I (the combination) fall ill, one part of me, I have never discovered which, invariably hints that I am not ill at all but merely

pretending. So much so that it has become with me a recognized symptom of incipient illness.

Moreover, the younger and older are never on the same side of any question. One leans to wisdom, the other to fun. I am a house divided against itself. The younger longs to dance, to go to the theatre and to play cards, all of which the older disapproves. The younger mocks the older, calls her hypocrite and the like until the older well-nigh believes it herself and almost yields to her pleadings. The older listens sedately to the sermon, while the younger plans her Easter suit or makes fun of the preacher.

The older declares she will never marry, while the younger scouts the idea of being an old maid. But even if she could gain the consent of the older it were but little better, they differ so as to their ideals.

In society the difference is more marked. I seem to be a combination chaperone and protege. The older appears at ease, the younger shy and awkward, she has never made her debut. If one addresses a remark to her she is thrown into utter confusion until the older rushes to the rescue. My sympathy is with the younger, however, for even to this day I, the combination, can scarce resist the temptation to say nothing when there is nothing to say.

There is something tragic to me in this Siamese twins arrangement of two so uncongenial. I am at one and the same time, pupil and teacher, offender and judge, performer and critic, chaperone and protege, a prim, precise, old maid and a rollicking school girl, a Tom-boy and prude, a saint and sinner. What can result from such a combination? That we get on tolerably is a wonder. Some days, however, we get on admirably together, part of me paying compliments to the other part of me—whole days being given to this—until each of us has such a good opinion of herself and the other that we feel on equal terms and are at our happiest.

But how dreadful are the days when we turn against each other! There are not words enough to express the contempt which we feel for ourselves. We seem to set each other in the corner and the combination as a whole is utterly miserable.

I can but wonder and enjoy and wait to see what *Myself* and *I* will make of *Me*.